

# Rucker's Ramblings

Yadkin County Center

December 2013

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## MANAGEMENT TIPS

- Map out forage demands for specific classes of livestock. Each animal unit (1 ave. cow or horse, 10-15 ave. sheep/goats) can eat at least 1-1 ½ to 2 % of their body weight, in hay per day.
- Cull non-essential animals. Don't waste expensive feed on non-productive animals.
- Test forages for nutrient content, so that ALL livestock receive what they need.
- If in need of a new herd sire, don't wait until the last minute.
- CHECK your animals REGULARLY!!! Don't let health or physical problems go unnoticed.
- Check females close to calving, lambing, foaling, kidding, etc. several times daily to catch potential problems early. Provide plenty of clean water, enough feed and adequate shelter.
- Do not graze fall planted perennial pastures until growth reaches 6-8 inches.
- Use bad weather days to work on herd records and make plans for the upcoming year.
- Keep your eye on cheap (cost effective) sources of feed that might become available.
- Castrate (males) and implant calves you plan to consign to next year's feeder calf sales.
- MAKE SURE YOUR LIVESTOCK HAVE PLENTY OF CLEAN FRESH WATER!!!
- Keep your horse's coat clean from mud. Mud reduces the natural insulation properties.
- Get those hooves checked out by your farrier. Winter is tough on feet and legs.



**THE EXTENSION CENTER** will be closed December 24, 25 & 26, 2013 as well as January 1, 2014 for observed holidays. We trust you will take time to spend with your families.

**PLEASE PROVIDE ME WITH IDEAS** for educational programs you feel are needed and would be well attended. I have planned programs that others requested but had low registration. I need ideas for programs that you will attend and that will help your operation as well as others.

**PLEASE MAKE A NOTE** of the events, listed in this newsletter, you want to attend as well as all the information, dates, locations and registration deadlines. As I have mentioned in previous newsletters, you might not get another notice **MAILED** due to time and postage. We will try to send emails to all who have provided their email information. Please make note of the events you want to attend so you do not miss registration deadlines or even miss attending the event.

Special accommodations will be made for the physically disabled, vision or hearing impaired person upon request. If special accommodations are required, please call Phil Rucker 679-2061, at least one week before the scheduled event.

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## STATESVILLE AREA BEEF CONFERENCE

The 2014 Statesville Area Beef Conference will be held **Thursday, January 9, at the Iredell County Agricultural Resource Center, in Statesville.** The program topics will include: Forage Programming in North Carolina, Animal Health Update, Beef Cattle Economic Climate Outlook as well as a Cattle Marketing Update. The speakers on tap are well versed in their fields and include: Dr. Miguel Castillo (NC State Forage Specialist), Dr. Andrew Griffith (University of Tennessee Economist), Marcus Harward and other interesting and knowledgeable speakers. There will be a sponsored meal and reservations are requested. This has always been a fun and educational event. **Call the Extension Office by Monday, January 6, to make a meal reservation,** get directions or more information. **THIS PROGRAM IS WORTH YOUR TIME TO ATTEND!!!**

The conference starts at 3:30 PM at the Iredell Agricultural Resources Center, 444 Bristol Dr., Statesville, NC. There will be a sponsored meal at the conclusion of the conference. Please mark your calendar to attend this event. It looks like a program that you don't want to miss.

## FORAGE AND GRASSLAND COUNCIL ANNUAL WORKSHOPS

The annual NC Forage and Grassland Council will hold their annual workshops throughout the state in January. **The closest one to us will be Wednesday, January 29 in Statesville.** The program will cover many different aspects of forage production and provide information to help you improve your operation. These workshops have proven very educational and worth your time to attend. There is an informational flyer attached in this newsletter along with the registration information. If you are interested or want to pre-register, please contact the Extension Center and we will try to assist you.



## WINTER TIME HORSE TIPS

As outside temperatures continue to drop, remember that horses prefer to drink water that is between 42 - 45 degrees. Add warm water to their buckets or purchase a bucket heater to encourage horses to drink enough water.

Horse owners should make time, with your veterinarian, to evaluate your heard health program and any changes or updates that are needed, to assure your horse stays healthy. Also discuss your feeding program and if any adjustments are needed. Don't change a horse's feed ration without advice from a veterinarian, Extension Agent or other qualified source. Even small changes in the ration can offset delicate mineral ratios that could negatively effect on your horse.



We at Cooperative Extension wish you and your family a happy and healthy holiday season. Please make time for family and friends.

## BACKYARD POULTRY WINTER TIPS

Winter can be a very tough time for backyard poultry flocks. Cold temperatures, less sunlight, the need for increased nutrition and plenty of water. To help your backyard buddies better tolerate the cold and possibly not drop off too much in egg production, see if some of these management practices might work in your situation. Add some supplemental light for some warmth and hens will potentially lay more with increased lighting. Don't overcrowd the birds as this leads to stress and reduced production (even cannibalism). Provide proper ventilation but reduce major drafts that could chill the birds. Provide proper and adequate nutrition for best performance and good health. Watch for scales, mites, other skin issues and diseases and treat as necessary. For more information or if you have questions, contact the Extension Office at 336/679-2061.

### 2014 DATES TO REMEMBER

January 4	Waynesville BCIP Bull Sale
January 9	Statesville Regional Beef Conference
January 29	NC Forage and Grassland Council Workshop, Statesville
February 5-7	Southern Farm Show, Raleigh <a href="http://www.southernfarmshow.com">www.southernfarmshow.com</a>
February 14 & 15	Cattlemen's Conference, Hickory

### HAY – DO YOUR ANIMALS CONSUME IT OR WASTE IT?

The highest expense of the cow/calf operation is the winter feed cost; estimated at 50 to 70% of the total feed cost. To better understand and help control feed cost, we need to better manage the waste and loss of our hay supply. Losses and/or waste occur during harvest, storage and feeding. The hay supply for most cow/calf producers is large round bales. Hay delivery methods, whether ground, spread on the ground or fed in feeders, will influence the amount lost or not consumed.

When feeding round-baled hay on the ground, roughly 29% more dry matter is required. Using feeders increases the amount of edible hay by reducing the animals trampling, bedding on and defecating on the hay. The differences between bale feeder design (cone, ring, trailer and cradle), animal behavior and hay losses were studied, and feeding losses were calculated.

The ring feeder had nearly twice the waste as the cone feeder. The trailer and the cradle feeder had four times the waste per animal compared to the cone design (see chart below). Also, animal behavior at the feeder was observed, helping explain some of these differences. The cows eating at the cradle feeder showed three times the amount of aggressive interactions compared to the other feeders. Aggressive interactions are described as behaviors that resulted in the displacement of another cow from the feeder.

To put these losses into dollars and cents, let's assume the animals are being fed for 120 days and hay is \$80 per ton. The table below shows the cost of hay waste ranging from \$4.32 to \$20.16. There are differences in the amount of waste between the bale feeder designs; however, using a bale feeder is an improvement over feeding on the ground. Remember there was 29% more feed required to feed an animal on the ground.

	<u>Cone</u>	<u>Ring</u>	<u>Trailer</u>	<u>Cradle</u>
Daily hay waste, lb./cow	.09	1.6	3.5	4.2
Total waste, lb/cow/120 days	108	192	420	504
Cost of waste*, \$	\$4.32	\$7.68	\$16.80	\$20.16

\* Hay is valued at \$80/ton

